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T H E

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By Mrs. M A D A N.

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THE

PROGRES

OF

POETRY



BY MR. MADAM

LONDON

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MDCCLXXIII

As every production of such a writer as the late Mrs. Madan (of whose poetical talents the Public has had so beautiful a specimen, in the Answer to Pope's celebrated Letter from Eloisa to Abelard,) must be acceptable to true taste, the editor of the following Poem (which may properly be stiled her master-piece) thought it but justice to her memory, and the world, to introduce it to public notice; hoping that no farther apology is necessary for adding to the large collection of beautiful writings, with which this country already abounds.

At every production of such a writer as
the late Mrs. Norton (of course political talents
the Public has had to be satisfied a specimen, in
the Address to Pope's celebrated Letter from Eliza
to Abolition, must be accepted as true. It is
the Editor of the *Journal* (which may
properly be filled for) thought it
but justice to her memory, and the world to in-
form it in public notice, hoping that no far-
ther apology is necessary for adding to the large
collection of *Journal* writings, and which this
country already contains.



[2]

THE
P R O G R E S S
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UNEQUAL, how shall I the search begin ?

Or paint with artless hand the awful scene ?

Thro' paths divine, with steps advent'ous tread,

And trace the Muses to their fountain-head ?

Ye sacred Nine ! your mighty aid impart,

Affist my numbers, and enlarge my heart ;

Direct

Direct my lyre, inform each trembling string,
 While Poetry's exalted sweets I sing ;
 How, free as air, its charms spontaneous move,
 Kindle to rage, or melt to peace and love ;
 How first its emanations dawn'd, disclose,
 And where, great Source of Verse, thou, Phoebus ! first
 arose.

Where Nature warmth and genius has deny'd,
 In vain are Art's stiff languid powers apply'd ;
 Unforc'd the Muses smile, above controul ;
 No art can tune the inharmonious soul.
 Some rules, 'tis true, unerring you may cull,
 And be, like DENNIS, regularly dull ;
 Correctly flat may flow each study'd line,
 And each low period indolently chime.



A common ear, perhaps, or vulgar heart,
 These lays may please, the labour'd work of Art ;
 Far other strains delight the polish'd mind,
 The ear well-judging, and the taste refin'd.
 To blend, in heavenly numbers, strength and fire,
 An ADDISON will ask, a POPE require ;
 Genius alone can force like theirs bestow,
 As stars unconscious of their brightness glow.

Hail Greece! from whence the spark ethereal came,
 That wide o'er earth diffus'd its sacred flame :
 There the first laurel form'd a deathless shade,
 And sprung immortal for thy HOMER's head ;
 There the great Bard the rising wonder wrought,
 And plann'd the Iliad in his boundless thought ;
 By no mean steps to full perfection grew,
 But burst, at once, refulgent on the view.

B

Who

Who can, unmov'd, the warm description read,
 Where the wing'd shaft repels the bounding steed ;
 Where the torn spoils of the rapacious war,
 With shocking pomp, adorn the victor's car ?
 When, from some hostile arm dismiss'd, the reed
 On the mark'd foe directs its thirsty speed,
 Such strength, such action, strikes our eager sight,
 We view, and shudder at its fatal flight !
 We hear the straighten'd yew, recoiling, start,
 And see thro' air glide swift the whizzing dart !
 When higher themes a bolder strain demand,
 Life waits the Poet's animating hand :
 There, where majestic to the sanguin'd field,
 Stern Ajax stalks behind his seven-fold shield,
 Or where, in polish'd arms severely bright,
 Pelides dreadful rouses to the fight.

With

With martial ardour, breathes each mighty page
 The fierce encounter, and celestial rage,
 The clash of arms tumultuous from afar,
 And all that fires the Hero's soul to war.

Bold PINDAR next, with matchless force and fire,
 Divinely careless, wak'd the sounding lyre ;
 Unbound by rule, he urg'd each vig'rous lay,
 And gave his mighty genius room to play :
 The Grecian Games employ his daring strings,
 In numbers rapid as the race he sings.

Mark, Muse, the conscious shade and vocal grove,
 Where SAPPHO tun'd her melting voice to Love ;
 While Echo each harmonious strain return'd,
 And with the soft complaining Lesbian mourn'd.

With roses crown'd, on flowers supinely laid,
 ANACREON next the sprightly lyre essay'd;
 To light fantastic measures beat the ground,
 Or dealt the mirth-inspiring juice around;
 No care, no thought, the tuneful trifler knew,
 But mark'd with bliss each moment as it flew.

Say, Muse, the soil where smooth Clitumnus glides,
 And rolls, thro' fields profuse, his ductile tides;
 Where swollen Eridanus in state proceeds,
 And fertile Mincio wanders thro' the meads;
 Where breathing flowers ambrosial sweets distil,
 And the soft air with balmy fragrance fill.—
 O Italy! tho' smiling Plenty reigns,
 Tho' Nature laughs amid thy bloomy plains;

Tho'

Tho' all thy shades poetic warmth inspire,
 Tune the rapt soul, and fan the sacred fire ;
 Tho' Liberty (thy only want !) were there,
 And gayly open'd with the purple year,
 Those streams, meads, shades, would touch their cer-
 tain date,
 And Liberty itself might stoop to Fate.
 A nobler boast thy lasting glory yields,
 That stamps eternal verdure on thy fields ;
 There VIRGIL his immortal harp has strung,
 And ADDISON, great VIRGIL's rival, sung.

Where courtly ease adorns each happy line,
 And PINDAR's fire, and SAPPHO's softness join ;
 Where every Grace, and all the Muses breathe,
 See HORACE, shaded by the lyric wreath !

Politely

Politely wise, with calm well-govern'd rage
 He lash'd the reigning follies of the age ;
 With wit, not spleen, indulgently severe,
 To reach the heart, he charm'd the list'ning ear :
 When soothing themes each milder note employ,
 Each milder note swells soft to Love and Joy,
 Smooth as the fame-presaging doves, yet spread
 Prophetic wreaths around his infant head.

Ye numerous Bards unsung (whose various lays
 A genius equal to your own should praise)
 Forgive the Muse, who feels an inbred flame,
 Resistless, to exalt her Country's fame :
 A foreign task she leaves—she turns her eyes
 Where her own Britain's fav'rite towers arise ;

Where Thames rolls deep his plenteous tides around,
 His banks with thick ascending turrets crown'd :
 Yet not these scenes the partial Muse could boast,
 Were Liberty, thy great distinction, lost.
 Britannia, hail ! o'er whose luxuriant plain
 For the free native waves the ripening grain :
 'Twas sacred Liberty's celestial smile
 First lur'd the Muses to thy generous isle ;
 'Twas Liberty bestow'd the power to sing,
 And bid the verse-rewarding laurels spring.

Here CHAUCER, first, his comic vein display'd,
 And merry tales in homely guise convey'd ;
 Unpolish'd beauties grac'd the artless song,
 Tho' rude the diction, yet the sense was strong.

To

To smoother strains chastising tuneless prose,
 In plain magnificence great SPENSER rose;
 In forms distinct, o'er each creating line,
 The Virtues, Vices, and the Passions shine;
 Subservient Nature aids the Poet's rage,
 And with herself inspires each vig'rous page.

While gentle COWLEY's lays harmonious move,
 Around him wait the Gods of Verse and Love;
 So quick the crowding images arise,
 The bright variety distracts our eyes;
 Each sparkling line, where fire and fancy flows,
 The rich profusion of his genius shows.

To WALLER next my wond'ring view I bend,
 Gentle as flakes of feather'd snow descend;

Not

Not the same snow, its silent journey done,
 More radiant glitters in the rising sun.
 O happy Nymph, who could these lays demand,
 And claim the care of this immortal hand !
 In vain might age thy heavenly form invade,
 And o'er thy beauties cast an envious shade :
 WALLER the place of youth and bloom supplies,
 And gives exhaustless lustre to thy eyes ;
 Each Muse assisting, rifles every grace,
 To paint the wonders of thy matchless face.
 Thus, when in Greece, divine Apelles strove
 To give to earth the radiant Queen of Love,
 From each bright Nymph some dazzling charm he took,
 This fair one's eyes, and that's resistless look ;
 Each Beauty, pleas'd, a smile, an air bestows,
 Till all the Goddesses from the canvass rose.

No common praise be thine, great Bard! whose strains
 With conscious strength a vulgar theme disdains;
 Sublime ascended thy superior soul,
 Above the lightning's flash and thunder's roll,
 Where other suns drink deep th' eternal ray,
 And thence to other worlds transmit the day;
 Where, round the pole, unnumber'd planets burn,
 And languid Cynthia lights her silver urn.
 O bear me to the soft elysian scenes,
 Where shades, far-spreading, boast immortal greens;
 Let Paradise disclose its fragrant flowers,
 Its sweets unfading, and celestial bowers;
 Gentle as Nature's infant beauties smil'd,
 Let Zephyr breathe amid the blooming wild,
 Stamp o'er the whole a never-ending spring,
 Which only Heaven could give, and MILTON sing!

Yet

Yet not these scenes could bound his daring flight,
 Born to the task, he rose a nobler height ;
 While o'er the lyre his hallow'd fingers fly,
 Each wond'rous touch awakens raptures high :
 MILTON alone those mansions durst explore,
 Where only Faith, till then, had power to soar.

The strong, the sweet, the moving, the sublime,
 In DRYDEN'S strains their various beauties join ;
 Aw'd by his lays, each rival Bard retir'd :
 So fades the Moon, pale, lifeless, unadmir'd,
 When Sol resplendent darts upon the sight,
 Gilds the grey dawn, and gives the vigorous light.

Smooth glide thy waves, O Thames ! while I rehearse
 The name that taught thee first to flow in verse ;

Let sacred silence hush thy grateful tides,
 The ozers cease to tremble on thy fides ;
 Let thy calm surface gently steal along ;
 DENHAM this homage claims, while he inspires my song,
 Far as thy billows roll dispers'd away,
 To distant isles the mighty name convey ;
 Not Phrygian Zanthus wears a nobler boast,
 In whose rich stream a thousand floods are lost.

O ADDISON, lamented, wond'rous Bard,
 The godlike Hero's great, his best reward !
 Not all the laurels reap'd on Blenheim's plains,
 A fame can give like thy immortal strains.
 While Cato dictates in thy mighty lines,
 Cæsar himself with second lustre shines ;

As

As our rais'd souls the great distress'd pursue,
 Triumphs and crowns grow mean beneath our view,
 We trace the victor with indignant eyes,
 And all, that made a Cato bleed, despise.

Sure Heaven, that destin'd Nassau to be great,
 To force confederate nations to retreat,
 To give a wild rebellious kingdom law,
 Bestow'd a GARTH, designing a Nassau.

High on the radiant list great POPE appears,
 With all the fire of youth, and strength of years;
 Where'er supreme he points the nervous line,
 Nature and Art in bright conjunction shine.
 How just the turns! how regular the draught!
 How smooth the language! how refin'd the thought!!

Secure,

Secure, beneath the shade of early rays,
 He dar'd the thunder of great Homer's lays,
 A sacred heat inform'd his heaving breast,
 And Homer, in his genius, stood confest;
 To heights sublime he rous'd the pond'rous lyre,
 And our cold isle grew warm with Grecian fire.

Wit, ease, and life, in PRIOR blended flow,
 Polite as GRANVILLE, soft as moving ROWE:
GRANVILLE! whose lays unnumber'd charms adorn,
 Serene and sprightly as the opening morn:
ROWE! who the way to ev'ry passion knew,
 And from our eyes call'd forth the kindly dew;
 Still shall his gentle Muse our souls command,
 Still our touch'd hearts avow his artful hand.

Yet this the least of his superior fame,
 Whose mighty genius caught great Lucan's flame ;
 Where Pompey sunk intrepid to his doom,
 And each free strain breathes Liberty and Rome.

Fain would I now th' excelling Bard reveal,
 And point where most th' assembled Muses dwell ;
 Where Phoebus has his warmest smiles bestow'd,
 And who most labours with th' inspiring God ::
 But while I strive to fix the ray divine,
 And round that head the laurel'd triumph twine,
 Unnumber'd Bards distract my dazzled sight,
 And my first choice grows faint with rival light:

So the bright road that stains the lucid skies,
 Seen, when fair Cynthia's temperate beams arise,

Thick

Thick set with stars, a mingled glory sheds,
 And o'er the pure translucent azure spreads;
 Amaz'd we view, from the ethereal height,
 A thousand orbs pour forth their sacred light;
 Blended their lustre seems, while all around
 Successive sparkles gild the milky bound;
 The dazzled eye, in countless beauty lost,
 Vainly essays to mark which shines the most;
 From each the same quick living splendors fly,
 And undistinguish'd brightness charms the eye.

F I N I S.



Thick